

## ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

## MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

for the year ended December 31st 1947.

To Thetford Urban District Council

Gentlemen,

I beg to submit my Annual Report for the year 1947 as follows:—

## SECTION A.—STATISTICS AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF THE AREA.

Area—7,096 acres.

Registrar-General's estimate of the population at mid year—4,346.

Number of inhabited houses according to the rate book—1306.

Rateable value—£19,154.

Sum represented by a penny rate—£76 7s. 8d.

The area is partly urban and partly rural. Industries in the urban area include Patent Pulp Manufacturing, Malting, Fruit Canning, the preparation of Coffee and Motor Engineering, to which have been added this year an electro plating plant and a small "shadow" engineering plant. In the rural area there is general estate work, forestry and a chemical manure factory. Sugar beet and fruit picking provide employment in their season.

The housing of the area is in many situations unsatisfactory in that much house property is in need of major repairs, and some of it should be condemned as unfit for human habitation; but here the problem of over crowding makes this step impracticable as there is not enough new housing in which the inhabitants of such houses might be re-housed. Owing to the return of many Service personnel with their families many homes have two or more families living together. The building of 40 new houses on St. Mary's Estate has been begun as a first step to relieve this situation. A few of them are already occupied. These new houses are drained so that they may be easily connected up to the water carriage sewage system mentioned in this section of my last annual report.

## Vital Statistics.

Live Births.	Total.	M.	F.	
Legitimate ... ..	97	48	49	Birth rate per 1000 of the population
Illegitimate ... ..	5	1	4	—23.5.
Still Births ... ..	2	2	Nil.	Rate per 1000 births—20.6.
Deaths ... ..	68	23	35	Death rate per 1000 of the population
				—15.6.

## Death from Puerperal causes (Headings 29 and 30 of the Registrar General's short list):—

No. 29 Puerperal Sepsis ... ..	Nil.
No. 30 Other Puerperal causes ... ..	Nil.
Total ... ..	Nil.

## Death rate of Infants under one year:—

All infants per 1,000 live-births ... ..	10.3.
Legitimate per 1,000 legitimate live births ... ..	Nil.
Illegitimate per 1,000 illegitimate live births ... ..	200.

Deaths from Cancer (all ages) ... ..	6.
„ „ Measles (all ages) ... ..	Nil.
„ „ Whooping Cough (all ages) ... ..	Nil.
„ „ Diarrhoea (under 2 years of age) ... ..	Nil.

The birth rate remains high as might be expected for some years after a war. The birth rate for England and Wales over the year was 20.5 per thousand of the population. Last year's preponderance of female births over male births has been reduced to about equality. Illegitimate births are considerably reduced and the infant death rate remains low, the only case occurring among the illegitimate births; hence the very large figure in that heading.



The death rate is high compared with the figure for England and Wales of 12.0 per thousand of the population. This is a common finding in the statistics for Thetford but the survival rate is usually satisfactory. This year 38 persons survived 70 years, 16 of them survived 80 years and two survived 90 years. The cause of death was heart disease in more than half the cases and if diseases of the blood-vessels are included (apoplexy) under this head it caused three quarters of the deaths. Cancer caused six deaths and tuberculosis two.

The health of the community has remained at a high level during the year in spite of extreme weather conditions. For two months at the end of the winter the temperature was about or below freezing point during which time there was little serious ill health, only two cases of pneumonia being notified and influenza was conspicuous by its absence and infectious disease was very low in incidence. Later there was an extremely hot summer when there was very little high wind and a small hatch of flies and consequently a low incidence of the non-specific tonsillar and gastro-enteric disease. Infectious disease remained at a low level except for catarrhal jaundice which accounted for half the notifications during the first six months of the year. Thereafter a serious epidemic of anterior poliomyelitis (infantile paralysis) occurred throughout the country. One case occurred in the town having become infected while on holiday.

During the year preparations were being made for the implementation of the National Health Service Act, 1946, and a memorandum was sent in surveying the public health services in the town and pointing out the possible alterations under the Act. It laid stress on the possible reduction of public health personnel in particular on the probable withdrawal of the part-time health visitor which might be considered a retrograde step.

## **SECTION B.—GENERAL PROVISION OF HEALTH SERVICES IN THE AREA.**

### **1. (1). Personnel.**

**M.O.H.** part time, who is also Medical Officer to the Infant Welfare Clinic.

**Sanitary Inspector**, part time, Royal Sanitary Institute.

**Health Visitor**, who acted as Nurse to the Infant Welfare Clinic, C.M.B., R.S.I., Health Visitors examination. R.S.I. Maternity and Child Welfare Certificate.

**District Nurse**, S.R.N., S.C.M.

**Town Midwife**, S.R.N., S.C.M., who took on the part time duties of the Health Visitor.

### **(2) Health Services.**

(a) Laboratory facilities were available at the County Isolation Hospital in Norwich.

(b) The Ambulance service continued to be run by a voluntary committee and members of the St. John's Ambulance Brigade and British Red Cross. In October a full-time driver was engaged in anticipation of the changes under the National Health Service Act, 1946.

(c) Nursing in the Home continued to be carried out by the District Nurse.

(d) There are two Clinics held in the town supplied by the County Council:—

The Tuberculosis Clinic once a month at the Cottage Hospital.

The Infant Welfare Clinic at the Old Maltings.

(e) Hospitals.—The Thetford Cottage Hospital; St. Barnabas Hospital, P.A.I.

### **3. Maternity and Child Welfare.**

This work is now entirely supervised by the Norfolk County Council. Nurse Sowels who had been the Health Visitor for many years was retired at the end of March and her duties were taken over by the town midwife. Nurse Sowels has worked untiringly for over 25 years since the inception of Thetford and District Maternity and Child Welfare Association and the town is highly indebted to her for her services to public health.

The ladies of the Welfare Association attend the Infant Welfare Clinic in a voluntary capacity to give assistance and keep the personal aspect of the service in evidence.

### **4. Nursing Homes.**

The two Nursing Homes are supervised by the Norfolk County Council. They have provided accommodation for some 250 confinements in the year. The great majority of cases in these Nursing Homes come from a wide area outside Thetford.

## **SECTION C—SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE AREA.**

### **1. (1) Water.**

A small extension was carried out to serve part of the new housing estate.

(a) A sample of water was submitted to the Public Analyst for Chemical and Bacteriological examination and was reported on as follows:—

“This is a pure and wholesome water of great organic and bacteriological purity and in every way fit for drinking purposes.”

(b) There is a very adequate supply and at no time was there any shortage. The number of houses supplied with a piped water supply is 1289. The only houses not supplied are those at a long distance from the town and which are situated on the rural fringe of the area.



(2). **Drainage and Sewerage.**

A small extension of surface main drain was carried out to serve part of the new housing estate.

2. **Rivers and Streams.**

No action has been taken during the year.

3. (1). **Closet Accommodation.**

The only changes have been the addition of 12 W.C's. to new houses, the conversion of 16 vaults to pails and 1 vault to W.C. These alterations now give:— W.C's. 329; Pails 667; Vaults 336.

(2). **Public Cleansing.**

The collection of refuse remains the same as in previous years.

(3). **Sanitary Inspection of the Area.**

No. of inspections for general nuisances	...	...	...	...	...	324
No. of informal notices served	...	...	...	...	...	24
No. of statutory notices served	...	...	...	...	...	1
No. of nuisances abated as a result of informal notices served	...	...	...	...	...	22
No. in hand at the end of the year	...	...	...	...	...	2

(4). **Shops and Offices.**

General routine inspections carried out

**SECTION D—HOUSING.**

A limited amount of routine inspections have been carried out during the year. Twelve of the 40 new houses were completed and occupied towards the end of the year. The other 28 houses on this estate were in an advanced state of construction and would be completed and ready for occupation early in 1948.

The selection of tenants for the first 12 houses ready for occupation was a matter of great difficulty, but a list of 10 families in great need of rehousing on public health grounds was submitted. This list included unfortunately a family of two without children whom, if the committee responsible for the allocation had used its discretion, might well have been housed in other Council property which might become vacant in the near future.

**SECTION E—(a) Milk Supply.**

As in previous years samples were taken and tested by lactometer.

(b) **Meat and Other Foods.**

A fair amount of meat and other foods were examined during the year resulting in the following being condemned as unfit for human consumption:— Carcase Pork 18 lb., Corned Beef 103 lb., Bacon 27lb., Semolina 19lb., Bunflour 16 lb., Cake and Biscuits 55 lb., Fish 603 lb., Cheese 28lb., Dried Fruits 429 lb., Peas 112 lb., Tinned Foods, various 215 tins, Rolled Oats 175 lb.

**SECTION F—PREVALENCE OF AND CONTROL OF INFECTIOUS AND OTHER DISEASES.**

Infectious disease has been at its minimum prevalence. Only 49 cases were notified. Twenty-five of these cases were infective hepatitis (jaundice) which is notifiable in the Eastern region only for research purposes. These cases occurred mainly during the hot weather of the summer.

During the latter half of the year there was the most serious nation wide epidemic of the century of anterior poliomyelitis (infantile paralysis). One case was notified in Thetford though the infection had been contracted while the boy was on holiday. He had unfortunately attended school while in the most infectious state and so all members of the school were quarantined for three weeks and very fortunately no further cases developed. One other case was notified and hospitalised but the diagnosis was not confirmed in hospital.

One case of diphtheria was notified but not confirmed in the laboratory. This disease is being very satisfactorily controlled by protective inoculation. This work is well up to standard in Thetford; 84% of the children under 5 years were so protected at the end of the year and a greater proportion of the children under 15 years also. It is not generally understood by parents that a reinforcing dose of the inoculation is recommended each five years throughout school life in order to secure complete immunity to the disease. The reason for this is a lack of the National propaganda which was so effective in getting the infants protected. The propaganda should be effective through the schools. I beg to reproduce some of the official figures issued by the Ministry of Health to show the astoundingly satisfactory results of the campaign for inoculation against diphtheria:—

Year	Notifications	Deaths
1940	46,281	2480
1941	50,797	2641
1942	41,404	1827
1943	34,662	1371
1944	29,949	934
1945	25,246	722
1946	18,283	472
1947	10,469	245

These figures speak for themselves, but they also indicate that most of the hard work was carried out while the nation was engaged in total warfare.

Notifications of Infectious Disease:—

Disease.	Total cases notified	No. admitted to hospital	Deaths
Pneumonia	3	1	nil
Measles	9	nil	nil
Whooping Cough	5	nil	nil
Chicken Pox	3	nil	nil
Anterior Poliomyelitis	2	2	nil
Puerperal Pyrexia	1	nil	nil
Infective Hepatitis	25	nil	nil

Tuberculosis:—

Age Periods.	New Cases				Deaths			
	Respiratory		Non-Respiratory		Respiratory		Non-Respiratory	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
15	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—
25	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	—
55	1	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
65	1	1	—	—	—	1	—	—
Total	3	4	2	—	—	1	1	—

In conclusion I would like to record my appreciation of the work done by Mr. L. G. Howell your Sanitary Inspector and my thanks for the help he has given me during my appointment as Medical Officer of Health.

I would also like to recommend that consideration be given to the provision of professional assistance for Mr. Howell on account of the increasing work with which he is having to deal in carrying out the post-war public health programme.

I remain Gentlemen,  
Your obedient Servant,

Thetford,  
30th November, 1948.

*J. H. Storer*  
Medical Officer of Health.